

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 IO-14 EUR-25 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 HUD-02

EA-11 AID-20 DRC-01 (ISO) W
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R 091140Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3497

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

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EO 11652 NA

TAGS: ELAB GH

SUB: GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS HOLDS QUADRENNIAL MEETING

REF: ACCRA 2426

SUMMARY: ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL ISSIFU ELECTED FOR FULL
FOUR-YEAR TERM AT TUC CONGRESS. ACHEAMPONG MADE PRO-LABOR
SPEECH BUT INCLUDED A REFERENCE TO RECENT STRIKES AND WARNED
WORKERS AGAINST REPEAT OF SUCH ACTION. TUC CONGRESS VOTED TO
DOUBLE MONTHLY UNION DUES; EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER DETERIORATION
OF LIVING STANDARD GHANAIA WORKERS; AND ASKED FOR MORE LABOR
REPRESENTATION ON GOVERNMENT-APPOINTED BOARDS AND CORPORATIONS.
WE CAN EXPECT SEE CONTINUED LABOR PRESSURE FOR INCREASED WAGES
TO MEET RISING COST OF LIVING, BUT, UNDER ISSIFU'S MODERATE
LEADERSHIP, THIS PRESSURE NOT LIKELY BE DEVELOPED INTO
CONFRONTATION SITUATIONS BY TUC. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CONTINUATION OF LOVE-FEAST BEGUN ON MAY DAY, GHANA TRADES
UNION CONGRESS (GTUC) AND CHAIRMAN GHANA'S RULING NATIONAL
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REDEMPTION COUNCIL (NRC) SHARED BILLING AND TRADED COMPLIMENTS

AND CONCERNS AT OPENING SESSION GTUC QUADRENNIAL CONGRESS MAY 3.

2. PRAISING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TUC AND NRC, ISSIFU REVIEWED HISTORY OF TUC FOLLOWING ITS DISSOLUTION BY FORMER BUSIA REGIME IN 1971 AND ITS RESTORATION BY NRC. HE MENTIONED PROBLEMS OF GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT AND SLOWNESS OF GOVERNMENT IN ESTABLISHING CENTRAL LABOR NEGOTIATING MACHINERY IN CIVIL SERVICE.

3. IN HIS ADDRESS, CHAIRMAN NRC COL. ACHEMPONG ANNOUNCED THAT GOVERNMENT WAS WRITING OFF A TUC DEBT OF SOME \$68,000 (79,000 CEDIS) IN PROPERTY RATE (TAX) ARREARS ON TRADE UNION BUILDING WHICH HE HAD DEEDED OVER TO TUC ON MAY DAY. CHAIRMAN ALSO PROMISED HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD DONATE TEN VEHICLES TO TUC. MAKING RIGHT NOISES ABOUT GOVERNMENT HELP WIT WORKERS' HOUSING, NRC'S GOOD WILL TOWARD A FREE LABOR MOVEMENT, AND PROMISING NO RPT NO LAY-OFFS WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, ACHEAMPONG WOVE INTO HIS TALK, A FERRAL TO RECENT STRIKES (ACCRA A-40, 4/18/74), AND WARNED WORKERS, "DON'T DO THAT AGAIN." HE AGREED TO LOOK INTO ESTABLISHMENT NEGOTIATING MACHINERY IN CIVIL SERVICE. GHANA EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE ALSO SPOKE TO CONGRESS AND ASKED TRADE UNIONS FOR A CONTINUATION OF LABOR TRUCE.

4. TUC CONGRESS VOTED TO DOUBLE MONTHLY UNION DUES FROM 20 TO 40 PESEWAS (US 17 TO 34 CENTS), THE FIRST INCREASE IN FIFTEEN YEARS. MONEY COMES TO TUC THROUGH CHECK-OFF SYSTEM. CONGRESS ALSO ADOPTED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INCREASE IN MINIMUM WAGE FROM ONE TO FOUR CEDIS A DAY (US 86 CENTS TO US DOLLARS 3.44). AMONG MANY RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED WERE:

(A) EXPRESSION GRATITUDE TO NRC CHAIRMAN FOR ASSISTANCE RENDERED LABOR MOVEMENT.

(B) PRAISE FOR NRC POLICY OF INCLUDING LABOR IN MANAGEMENT OF COUNTRY'S ECONOMY BY NAMING TUC REPRESENTATIVES TO PUBLICLY APPOINTED BOARDS AND CORPORATIONS. HOPE THAT NRC WILL EXPAND THIS POLICY, INCLUDING THE APPOINTMENT OF A LABOR REPRESENTATIVE TO PRICES AND INCOMES BOARD.

(C) EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OVER DETERIORATION IN LIVING STANDARD GHANAIAAN WORKER AND INABILITY OF PRICES AND INCOMES BOARD TO EFFECT "ANY MEANINGFUL CONTROL OVER PRICES AND RENTS AS IT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GLEEFULLY DOES OVER WAGES."

(D) MASS CONTINUATION OF LOW-COST RENTAL HOUSING BY GOVERNMENT.

(E) FULL SUPPORT OF HANA LABOR MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM FIGHTERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

5. FRATERNAL DELEGATIONS ATTENDING CONGRESS INCLUDED SIERRA

LEONE, NIGERIA, USSR (AUCCTU), TOGO, GUINEA, HUNGARY, EAST GERMANY AND WFTU. RESIDENT EASTERN EUROPEAN AND PRC DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL ALSO ATTENDED OPENING SESSION OF CONGRESS, ALONG WITH US, UK AND TOGOLESE REPRESENTATION.

6. A.M ISSIFU, ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL SINCE 1972, WAS ELECTED UNOPPOSED TO FOUR-YEAR TERM. E.T. ASHLEY UNANIMOUSLY RE-ELECTED CHAIRMAN TUC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOLLOWING WITHDRAWAL OF TWO RIVAL CANDIDATES. A MODERATE AND REASONED MAN, ISSIFU HAS BEEN GOOD FOR TRADE UNION MOVEMENT UNDER NRC. DURING PAST TWO YEARS, HE HAS SOUGHT TO PROTECT LABOR INTERESTS WHILE DEALING WITH DIFFICULT OR INCOMPETENT COMMISSIONERS FOR LABOR. WHILE NRC MAY BELIEVE IT HAS AS TAME A LABOR LEADER AS IT COULD HOPE FOR, WE SUSPECT ISSIFU HAS DETERMINED ONLY SAFE WAY TO GAIN WORKER BENEFITS UNDER PRESENT REGIME IS TO CONTINUE CAUTIOUS TACTICS HE HAS BEEN USING. DURING LAST FEW MONTHS, ISSIFU HAS USED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRAISE NRC'S POLICIES WHILE AT SAME TIME CALLING ATTENTION TO INFLATION AND RISING COSTS OF LIVING TO JUSTIFY WORKER' DEMANDS FOR INCREASED WAGES. SO FAR THESE TACTICS HAVE PAID OFF. GROWING NUMBERS OF NEGOTIATED WAGE INCREASES HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY PRICES AND INCOMES BOARD, AND NRC HAS DECREED TWO GOVERNMENT PAY HIKES. ISSIFU UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE, TOO, THAT NRC WANTS TO SOLIDIFY LABOR MOVEMENT SUPPORT AND WOULD BE RELUCTANT TAKE ACTION TO ALIENATE SUCH A VOCAL AND POTENTIALLY DISRUPTIVE GROUP OF THE GHANAIAAN BODY POLITIC. SO LONG A NRC CONTINUES PERMIT WAGE INCREASES, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ISSIFU WILL PERMIT SERIOUS GOVERNMENT/LABOR CONFRONTATION TO DEVELOP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, COST OF LIVING, PROLABOR, SPEECHES, MEETINGS, LABOR UNIONS, FEES, NEGOTIATIONS, PRICE CONTROLS, WAGE RATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ACCRA02555
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740132-0656, D740113-0530
From: ACCRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740562/aaaacdof.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ACCRA 2426
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 AUG 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <06 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS HOLDS QUADRENNIAL MEETING
TAGS: ELAB, GH, TUC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005